

Testimony of CT Association of School Based Health Centers, Inc.
Appropriations Committee

Thank you Senator Harp, Rep. Geragosian and members of the committee for allowing me to offer testimony on behalf of the CT Association of School Based Health Centers. My name is JoAnn Eaccarino and I am currently President of the Association. I am here to testify to the devastating effect that a \$1 million dollar cut in the last quarter of this year would have on the school based health center program. This cut represents the latest in a series of cuts proposed by the Governor: first, a \$500,000 cut was made this school year as part of her 5% recission; followed by a proposed 1.2 million dollar cut for FY 10-11, and now a 1 million dollar cut in the last months of the 09-10 school year....That's nearly 3 million dollars for a program with just over a 10 million dollar line item! This for a program that serves as the ultimate safety net for kids who cannot access care in their communities for many reasons: uninsured, transportation issues, loss of provider because they can't afford to pay their overdue co-pays, parent's fears of losing their jobs because they have to leave work to get a sick child, and often a child that can be adequately treated in the school based health center and sent back to class.

These cuts will affect vital services. Here are some examples:

- In Danbury – dental office equipment purchased three years ago with bond money from the State of CT will sit idle because the money that is cut was used to pay for a dentist to provide restorative dental care;
- In Groton/New London – medical and mental health services will be cut for children including those of military families, often with a parent who is deployed and the other who is trying to work during their children's school hours. This is the sub-base that the State and our federal delegation have worked so hard to protect and keep in southeastern Connecticut. In the words of a former serviceman. "Receiving cookies and phone cards are definitely a plus when you're overseas. But telling me that you're going to take care of my kids while I'm gone is what I need to know in order to do my job the best I can";
- In East Hartford and Windham – all five SBHCs (3 in East Hartford and 2 in Windham) will close on May 7th, just when kids are needing mandatory school physicals, treatment for increased asthma and allergies, increased injury care and the support they need to prepare for transitions to new grades/schools. The increasing family violence that comes with the kind of economic turbulence we're facing and the need for therapeutic services is a daily reality. Our families tell us that they've lost their jobs, but still don't qualify for state insurance. So the choice becomes one of paying the mortgage/rent in order to not lose their home, or buying food and medicine, or getting medical care. These are the folks who never depended on the school based health centers, but they do now.

These are just a few examples. The fact is that EVERYONE...all communities... will have to decrease services to children. Even if they're cutting support services, that still means that fewer children will be seen because the direct service staff will have to pick up their functions. And finally, let me remind you that many of these same children will now be treated at emergency rooms at a cost 20 times that of a visit to the school based health center. The full list of the impact of this 1 million dollar cut can be found on the back of this page of testimony. Thank you.



For more information, contact the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers at 203-230-9976.

Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers

Description of the Impact of Potential Reductions to School Based Health Centers in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2010

The Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2010 calls for a \$1 million dollar reduction to School Based Health Centers (SBHCs). The proposed reduction would impact all fourth quarter funding and compounds the \$522,032 reduction (5% of total SBHC budget) already rescinded in the fiscal year, and the discontinuation of \$1.47 million of expansion funding to sites identified as having children with serious access to healthcare issues. In addition, the Governor's budget for FY 2011 calls for an additional \$1.23 million dollar reduction to SBHCs. The potential impact of the proposed reductions to each School Based Health Center community is listed below.

<p>Ansonia</p> <p>The SBHC program has been impacted by a vacancy in the physical health provider position for more than one quarter of the year which has reduced the overall medical visits to the school based health center. The potential loss of additional funding in the next fiscal year would cause a reduction of currently available services.</p>	<p>Groton/New London/Norwich/Waterford</p> <p>Reduction of 3 FTE nurse practitioners and 1 FTE mental health clinician, elimination of .5 Young Parents Program staff, elimination of 2 FTE secretaries (responsible for data entry, appointment scheduling, patient flow), and 3 part-time consulting physicians. Visits will drop by ~1500 for medical and mental health services.</p>	<p>Norwalk</p> <p>Would potentially close 5 weeks early on May 7th. Student visits would be reduced by 2500 visits in 1st last quarter. Access to medical care for acute health issues will be greatly reduced, along with reduced mental health counseling, group health education, and therapy session. Staff retention will be impacted.</p>
<p>Branford</p> <p>May have to close SBHC program for the 4th quarter, effective April 1, 2010. Health care will not be provided for children that suffer from mental health disorders and those with chronic diseases, including 15 students that receive monitoring for diabetes, heart conditions, and other serious health complications.</p>	<p>Hamden</p> <p>Impact of potential reduction will restrict mental health services to insured students only. Uninsured students will not receive services, causing greater utilization of the ED. Lab services will only be available to children with HUSKY. Uninsured students will not receive medications or lab tests. Nurse practitioner hours will be decreased to one day per week; data entry clerk hours will be decreased. Medical services will be eliminated.</p>	<p>Stamford</p> <p>Mental health services will potentially be eliminated by layoffs of PT mental health clinician and consulting psychiatrist. Medication management will be compromised. Student academic achievement and behavior will be impacted. The SBHC will close on May 14th rather than 5 weeks later in June. Follow-up to students with mental health issues will be virtually impossible.</p>
<p>Bridgeport</p> <p>May have to reduce hours of operation but with continued cuts would have to eliminate some staff. This will impact the large numbers of uninsured students most acutely as they have few alternatives for care. The number of Emergency Department visits will increase as the ED replaces the SBHC or physician's office.</p>	<p>Hartford</p> <p>Underserved population of children will be impacted. Annual visits will be reduced by 9000. Medical, mental health, and dental service time will be reduced, eliminated a major source of healthcare for Hartford's children. Uninsured families would not be served.</p>	<p>Waterbury</p> <p>Potential reductions will cause one SBHC to close entirely on April 1st. SBHC staff hours will be reduced by 25% across all 4 sites. More than 300 students will not have access to medical, mental health, and dental services currently utilized in the 4 SBHCs.</p>
<p>Danbury</p> <p>Impact will include potential reduction of clinical staff hours and office hours effective April 1st to one or two days per week. An alternative plan would be to close the SBHCs completely on May 15th, before the close of school. Children will not receive care at the SBHC until September when school reopens. Staff retention will be impacted.</p>	<p>New Britain/Middletown</p> <p>Loss of funding to sponsoring organization will impact overall budget; potential reductions will reduce support staff that are currently responsible for billing/revenues; appointment scheduling, patient flow, data entry.</p>	<p>Windham</p> <p>Potential reductions will cause both SBHCs to close 7 weeks earlier - on May 7th. Seven SBHC staff positions will be eliminated. Services will be decreased by 8.5% in more than 360 visits. Students will not have access to needed care, resulting in increased use of ED for primary care services.</p>
<p>East Hartford</p> <p>Due to 15% reduction of expansion funding already this year, all 3 SBHCs would close on May 7, 2010 rather than mid-June. This will cause a reduction of 1,140 medical and mental health visits which represents a 17% reduction in services.</p>	<p>New Haven</p> <p>Proposed reduction in 4th quarter will cause staff to be furloughed effective April 1, 2010. Will selectively lay off staff members. Some sites would shut down immediately at beginning of the 4th quarter.</p>	